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LESSONS INCULCATED ON THE COAST OF GEORGIA DURING THE
CONFEDERATE WAR.

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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CONFEDERATE
SURVIVORS' ASSOCIATION,

--IN--

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA,

AT ITS FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING, ON MEMORIAL DAY,

APRIL 26, 1883.

--BY--

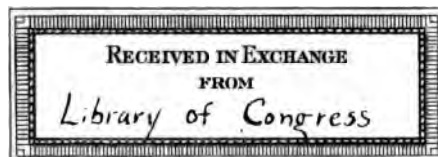
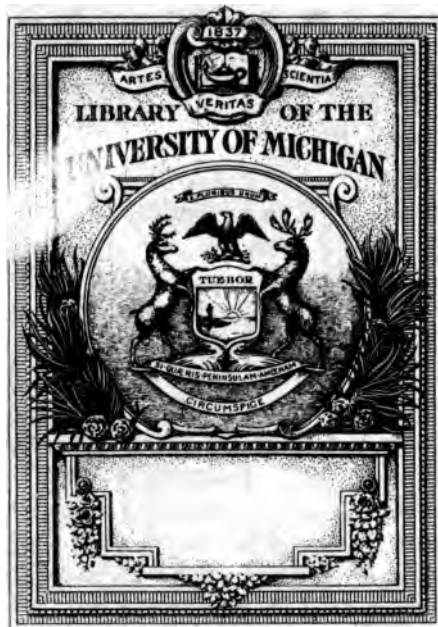
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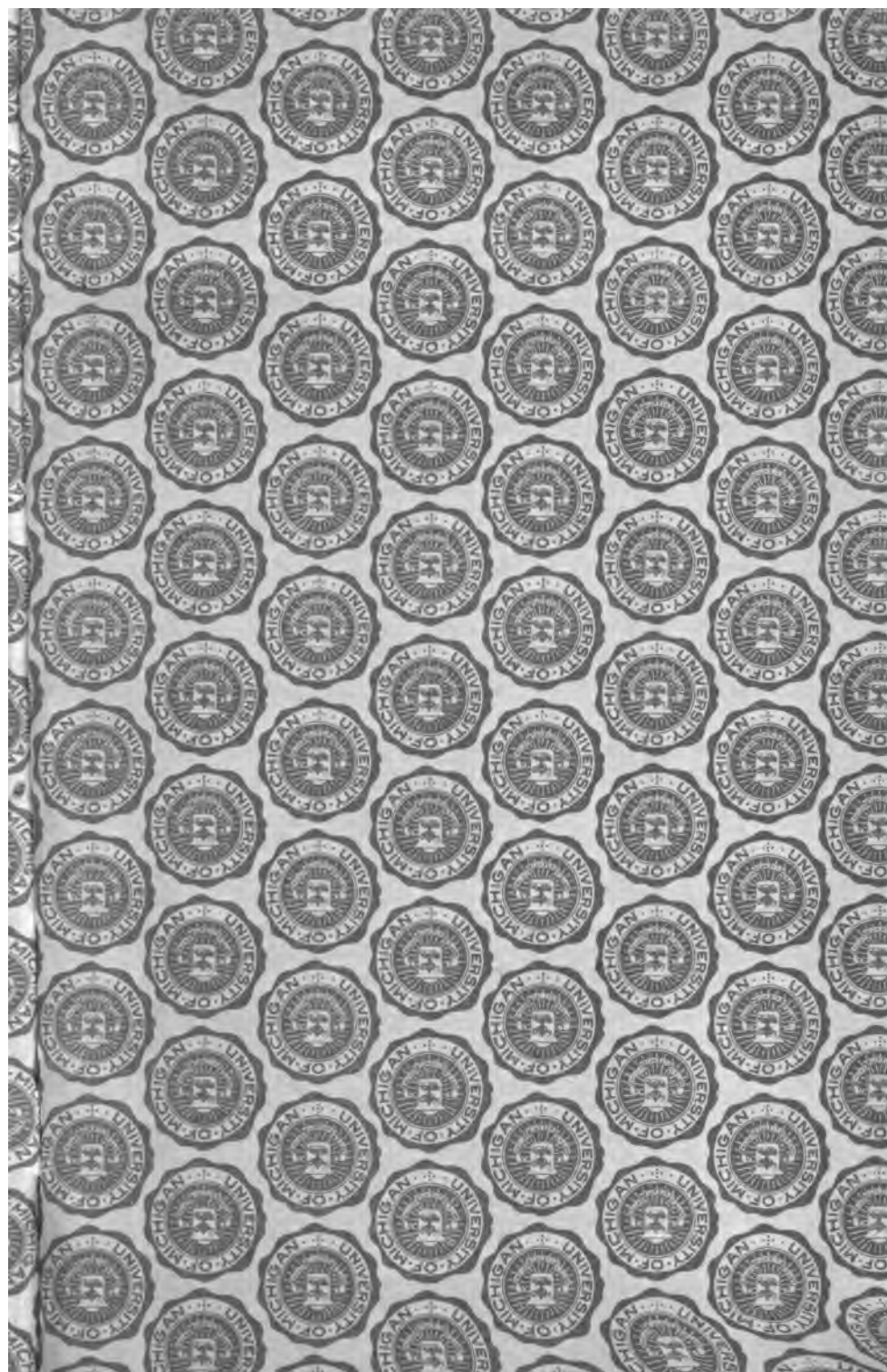
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AUGUSTA, GA.

CHRONICLE PRINTING ESTABLISHMENT.
1883.





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CONFEDERATE WAR.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

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—IN—

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AT ITS FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING, ON MEMORIAL DAY,

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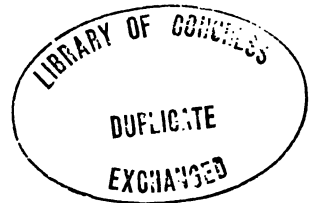
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ADDRESS.

Fellow-Members of the Confederate Survivors' Association:

Since our last Annual Meeting many of the survivors of the Confederate struggle for independence have passed into the realm of shadows. Prominent among them were two from our own State. Benjamin H. Hill—a noted Senator in the Congress of the Confederate States, an orator of surpassing eloquence, and a fearless advocate of Southern rights,—after a lingering and most painful illness found rest in the bosom of the land he loved so well. Not two months since, our Chief Magistrate, Governor Alexander Hamilton Stephens, Vice-President of the Confederacy, having attained unto the full measure of human life, crowned with the highest honors, and engaged in the discharge of the most illustrious duties enjoined by the Commonwealth, was called in a moment from the field of dignified labor to the regions of beatific repose.

The “fell Sergeant Death,” so “strict in his arrest,” has, during the past twelve-month, summoned to their silent chambers five of our companions;

PHILIP L. COHEN, Second Lieutenant Company A., Seventh Regiment South Carolina Cavalry;

ALEXANDER PHILIP, Captain and A. Q. M. Third Regiment Georgia Infantry;

J. F. THOMPSON, Private Company I, Cobb Legion of Cavalry;

S. M. JACKSON, First Lieutenant Company A, Fourth Battalion Georgia Sharp Shooters; and

J. V. H. ALLEN, Major Sixty-third Regiment Georgia Infantry.

Thus, on this Memorial Day consecrated to the memory of our Confederate dead, are we admonished that there are new graves claiming garlands at our hands, other spirits, loyal and

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true, challenging our friendship beyond the stars. And so will it be each year until this generation shall have been wholly gathered to its fathers. Then, to those who come after us, and to the grateful appreciation of other ages, will we confidently commit the conservation of traditions we now so tenderly cherish, the veneration of lives and acts and aspirations we treasure with a devotion fadeless and pure.

But, my Comrades, turning aside from the present, let us for a few moments revive the recollection of two important lessons in the art of war first inculcated upon the low lying coast of Georgia.

Upon the evacuation of Tybee island by the Confederate forces in November, 1861,—an evacuation suggested and precipitated by the fall of Port Royal—the Federals were enabled, unopposed, to possess themselves of the mouth of the Savannah river, and to enter upon the erection of formidable land batteries for the reduction of Fort Pulaski.

The removal of the obstructions planted by Confederate engineers in Wall's Cut—an artificial channel connecting New and Wright rivers—opened up to the gunboats of the enemy an entrance into the Savannah in rear of that fortification and without encountering the fire of its guns. Federal working parties were landed at Venus' Point, and on the north end of Bird's Island. To them was assigned the duty of constructing redoubts, and of mounting guns which would effectually command the passage of the Savannah river and cut off all communication between Fort Pulaski and the city of Savannah.

The isolation of the fort was thus compassed on the 22d of February, 1862. A short time prior to this unfortunate occurrence, at the request of Brig. Gen. Alexander R. Lawton, commanding the Military District of Georgia, Commodore Tattnall, with his little fleet, in the face of the Federal gunboats, forced the passage of the river, and threw into the fort a six months' supply of provisions. It was an exploit characteristic of this noble officer whose conspicuous valor, intrepidity, and acknowledged ability had long reflected honor upon the American navy, and secured for him a reputation which neither the lapse of years nor the mutations of fortune can impair.

Until the afternoon of the 9th of April the United States forces, in undisturbed possession of Tybee Island, were there intelligently and persistently engaged in the erection and equipment of strong shore batteries for the reduction of Fort Pulaski. Upon the isolation of that fortress in the manner we have indicated, the Confederates, through a lack of war vessels, found themselves entirely incapable of reinforcing the post, or of raising the blockade strictly maintained by the Federal fleet, and by battery Vulcan, at Venus' Point, mounting six guns, battery Hamilton, on the upper end of Bird's Island, similarly armed, a battery on the lower side of Long Island, and a battery of three guns on Decent Island, which was subsequently transferred to a hulk anchored in Lazaretto Creek at its confluence with Oyster Creek. In the absence of help which could not, in the nature of things, be extended, the retention of the fort by its Confederate garrison became a matter of limited time, the duration of which, under the most favorable circumstances, could be admeasured by the supplies on hand. Relief was impossible and retreat impracticable.

While the enemy was busy in establishing eleven investing batteries on Tybee Island, at a remove from the fort varying from 1,650 to 3,400 yards, the garrison was employed in protecting the barbette guns with additional traverses, in occasionally annoying the working parties of the enemy as they exposed themselves, and in the performance of such labors as contributed to the defensive capabilities of the fortification. Never for a moment was it believed that its walls could be breached or that the work could be rendered untenable by the fire of guns located on Tybee Island. This opinion was expressed by no less a commander than General Robert E. Lee, who had been assigned to duty in the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. It was acquiesced in by other officers whose judgment and experience inspired confidence. In the history of siege artillery breaches in substantial masonry walls had never been compassed at such distances, and the impression was based upon the previously well ascertained effect of round shot projected from eight and ten-inch Columbiads, than which no heavier guns hurling solid shot were then known to the artillerist. These results attained by smooth bore guns

were relied upon by the Confederates in conjecturing the influence of the anticipated bombardment. In this calculation the novel presence of rifle guns, conical shot, and percussion shells did not enter. With them and the potent influence they were destined to exert the military mind was not familiar. An experiment, most important, was on the eve of being tested, and the accepted theories of former days were now to be weighed in a new balance.

To General David Hunter's summons of surrender, served shortly after sunrise on the morning of the 10th of April, Colonel Olmstead returned the following laconic and brave response: "I can only say that I am here to defend the Fort, not to surrender it."

The Confederate garrison—numbering twenty-four officers and some three hundred and sixty-five men—was composed of the following companies: The German Volunteers, Captain John H. Stegin; the Washington Volunteers, Captain John McMahon; the Wise Guards, Captain M. J. McMullen; the Oglethorpe Light Infantry, Company B, Captain F. W. Sims; and the Montgomery Guards, Captain L. J. Guilmartin. These companies all belonged to the First Volunteer Regiment of Savannah, with the exception of the Wise Guards, which was attached to the 25th Regiment of Georgia Infantry.

The armament of the Fort was as follows: Five 10-inch and nine 8-inch Columbiads, unchambered; three 42-pounder and twenty 32-pounder guns; two 24-pounder Blakely rifle guns; one 24-pounder iron howitzer; two 12-pounder bronze howitzers; two 12-inch iron mortars; three 10-inch sea coast mortars, and one 6-pounder gun; aggregating, of all calibres, forty-eight pieces. Of these only twenty could be brought to bear upon the Federal batteries on Tybee Island. Those batteries were named, located, and armed as follows:

I. Battery Stanton, 3,400 yards distant, mounting three heavy 13-inch mortars;

II. Battery Grant, 3,200 yards distant, and similarly armed;

III. Battery Lyon, 3,100 yards distant, mounting three 10-inch Columbiads;

IV. Battery Lincoln, 3,045 yards distant, mounting three 8-inch Columbiads;

V. Battery Burnside, 2,750 yards distant, mounting one 13-inch mortar;

VI. Battery Sherman, 2,650 yards distant, mounting three 13-inch mortars;

VII. Battery Halleck, 2,400 yards distant, mounting two 13-inch mortars;

VIII. Battery Scott, distant 1740 yards, mounting three 10-inch and one 8-inch Columbiads;

IX. Battery Sigel, distant 1,670 yards, mounting one 48-pounder James rifle gun, and five 30-pounder Parrott guns on siege carriages;

X. Battery McClellan, distant 1,650 yards, mounting two 84-pounder and two 64-pounder James rifle guns, and

XI. Battery Totten, located at a similar remove, and equipped with four 10-inch mortars.

These batteries—distributed along a front of 2,550 yards, and mounting in the aggregate thirty-six pieces—were admirably protected and so arranged as to concentrate their converging fire upon and against Fort Pulaski with its perpendicular masonry walls—twenty-five feet high—looming up in bold relief. The guns of the enemy, securely embrasured, were posted behind stout sand parapets, low-lying, and difficult to be struck.

At a quarter past 8 o'clock on the morning of the 10th of April the first shell was fired from Battery Halleck, and at once all the Federal batteries opened. A few minutes after, the Fort replied and the action became general.

It lies not within the scope of this address to note all the incidents of this bombardment, which was, with slight intermission, maintained until the afternoon of the following day. By the three thousand shells and solid shot emitted from the ten and thirteen-inch mortars and from the eight and ten-inch Columbiads, admirably served by the United States troops, comparatively little damage was inflicted upon Fort Pulaski. Had these guns only been employed, the probability is that structure would have preserved its integrity, and would have held out for an indefinite period.

To the new and unexpected effect of the conical shot and percussion shells ejected from the James and Parrott rifles must

be credited the breaching of the wall, the partial demoralization of the work, and the accomplishment of disastrous results which speedily rendered the fortification untenable.

While the arches of the Fort resisted the heaviest vertical fire encountered at the mouths of large mortars, and while the impact of solid shot from eight and ten-inch Columbiads proved inadequate for the serious impairment of the masonry walls of the fortress, it was quickly demonstrated that this well constructed fortification could not long resist the penetration of, and demolition by, rifle projectiles guided with remarkable precision.

Concentrating the fire of their James and Parrott guns—located in batteries Sigel and McClellan, distant respectively 1,670 and 1,650 yards—upon the *pan coupe* at the southeast angle of Pulaski, the Federals, by nightfall of the 10th, had not only dismounted all the guns in that vicinity, but had succeeded in demoralizing, to a depth varying from two to four feet, the entire wall from the crest of the parapet to the moat.

At ten o'clock the next morning a considerable breach was effected in the *pan coupe*, which every shot served to enlarge. By noon the wall of another and an adjacent casemate yielded; and, before long, the rifle projectiles, passing through the breach, swept across the parade and impinged against the traverses which protected the north magazine. Soon conical shells were exploding within a few feet of the door of that magazine. Longer tenure of the Fort became most perilous, if not impracticable, and the white flag was displayed at half past two in the afternoon of the 11th of April, 1862.

The guns which had wrought this special damage were the five 30-pounder Parrott guns, and one 48-pounder, two 64-pounder, and two 84-pounder James rifles. The fire of the twelve 13-inch, and of the four 10-inch mortars, as well as of the six 10-inch and four 8-inch Columbiads, while very annoying, and particularly harmful to the guns mounted *en barbette*, was, so far as the walls and arches of the Fort were involved, comparatively innocuous. From these smooth bore weapons came no special cause of alarm. Had they alone been brought into action, Pulaski could have been held for days and perhaps weeks; in fact, until the exhaustion and slaughter of its de-

fenders or their starvation compelled a surrender. The sharp, accurate, decisive work of the rifle guns brought about the catastrophe, and, for the first time, we believe, in the history of bombardments, illustrated the penetrating power, the efficient range, and the superiority of such ordnance.

So accurate and destructive was the fire of these James and Parrott rifles that, at the moment when the token of capitulation was exhibited, all the casemate guns bearing upon Tybee Island, except two, had been dismounted. Of the barbette guns only two could be brought to bear upon the Federal batteries causing the principal damage. The outer wall of two casemates had been entirely carried away, and that enclosing the two adjoining ones was in a crumbling condition. By the ruins of this disintegrated wall was the moat in front completely bridged over. Riddled by shot and torn by shell, most of the traverses no longer afforded the shelter they were designed to provide. The range of officers' quarters and kitchens was badly damaged, and the north magazine was in imminent danger of being exploded.*

The military lesson taught on this occasion, as then recognized and interpreted, may be thus stated:

I. That with heavy rifle guns the practicability of breaching admirably constructed brick scarp, with satisfactory rapidity, at a distance of twenty-five hundred yards, admitted of no doubt. Had the Federal artillerists been aware of the power of the James and Parrott rifles used in the bombardment prior to its inception, the eight weeks of laborious preparation for the reduction of Fort Pulaski could have been materially curtailed. Heavy mortars and columbiads would have been omitted from the armament of the batteries, as being unsuitable for breaching at long ranges.

II. That the minimum distance—say from nine hundred to one thousand yards—at which land batteries had theretofore been considered as practically harmless against exposed masonry, must be at least trebled now that rifle guns have to be provided against.

* See official report of Col. Olmstead.

III. That mortars cannot be depended upon for the reduction of a good casemated work of small area.*

The siege and reduction of Fort Pulaski will be remembered as an important event, not only in the history of the war between the States, but also in the practical development of the science of artillery. The impulse which the results there obtained imparted to the manufacture and use of heavy rifled ordnance and conical projectiles was strikingly illustrated during the subsequent operations of the Federals in Charleston harbor and at other points. Unfortunately for us we possessed neither the means nor the facilities for profiting largely by this dearly bought experience.

Nor was this lesson heeded only on this side of the Atlantic where one, two, and three hundred pounder Parrott guns have become established weapons of attack and defense. The nations of Europe, appreciating its value, have remodeled their permanent forts, and consigned to oblivion, both on shore and at sea, those old-fashioned smooth bore guns the thunders of which had so long been regarded as most potent in deciding the fortunes of battle. Behold the Krupp guns which, by their powerful range and tremendous effect, were largely instrumental in determining the issue of the Franco-Prussian war! See, too, those iron monsters, handled by English seamen, overwhelming the land batteries at Alexandria by the resistless masses ejected from their stentorian and remorseless throats!

We do not transcend the teachings of history when we affirm that the bombardment of Fort Pulaski, which culminated so disastrously to Confederate hopes and wrested from us one of our most formidable fortresses, was largely instrumental in revolutionizing former theories respecting the nature and efficiency of heavy artillery, and in introducing at home and abroad, on land and at sea, rifled guns which are now the embodiment of martial power and precision.

As, at Fort Pulaski, the problem of the reduction of masonry walls at unusual ranges by rifle guns was solved to the surprise of many and in contravention of accepted theories, so, at Genesis Point, the value of sand parapets was fully substantia-

*See Report of Brig. Gen. Q. A. Gillmore, U. S. A.

ted in the face of ordnance of large calibre and tremendous power.

The name of Fort McAllister will ever remain famous in the annals of Georgia. Although the changing seasons have already spread the mantle of decay over its abandoned magazines, and wild flowers are blooming in its gun-chambers, history will continue to dwell with admiration upon the valor which defended, and the patriotism which glowed within its walls.

Constituting the right of the exterior line, designed and held for the protection of Savannah, and situated on the right bank of the Great Ogeechee river at Genesis Point, this Fort effectually commanded that stream, afforded ample defense against naval forces contemplating the destruction of the railway bridge near Way's Station, and prevented the disorganization of the slave labor upon the rice plantations in its vicinity. From the date of its construction—which was well-nigh coeval with our earliest Confederate coast defenses—to the day of its capture on the 13th of December, 1864, it subserved purposes most conducive to the general welfare, and, on various occasions, gallantly repulsed the well directed and persistent naval attacks of the enemy.

The first attack sustained by this Fort occurred on the 29th of June, 1862. It was then in an unfinished condition—its armament consisting of only one 42-pounder and five 32-pounder guns. Four Federal gun boats, armed with eleven-inch Dahlgren and rifled guns, constituted the assaulting fleet. Over seven hundred shots were fired by the enemy, and the engagement lasted for more than two hours. Although the quarters in the Fort were considerably damaged and the 40-pounder gun was disabled, the parapet of the work sustained no material injury.

In November of the same year twice was Fort McAllister bombarded by United States gun boats and mortar schooners.

On the morning of the 27th of January, 1863, the Federal iron-clad *Montauk*, accompanied by the gun boats *Wissahickon*, *Seneca* and *Dawn*, the mortar schooner *C. P. Williams*, and the tug *Daffodil*, advanced up the river and, at half-past seven o'clock, opened fire upon the Fort. Armed with one 15-inch

gun and an 11-inch Dahlgren gun, the *Montauk* took up a position nearly abreast of the battery and in proximity to the obstructions extending across the river in front of the Fort. Assisted by other vessels at longer range, for five hours and a half did this iron-clad hurl her enormous projectiles against the sand-parapet and explode them within the parade of this heroic little fort, the heaviest guns of which, although served with skill and determination, were powerless to inflict injury upon the thick iron sides and turret of this war vessel. Despite a prodigious expenditure of shot and shell on the part of the enemy, the damage caused to the river front of the work was repaired before morning.

To this bombardment much historical interest attaches, because, *on this occasion, a fifteen-inch gun was first used in the attempt to reduce a shore battery, and the ability of properly constructed sand parapets to resist the effect of projectiles surpassing in weight and power all others previously employed in modern warfare, was fairly proven.* To the honor of this battery, and to the praise of its defenders be this fact recorded and proclaimed. Thus, upon the coast of Georgia, was a second military lesson inculcated, the importance of which was duly recognized in the subsequent conduct of the war—a lesson which enjoined essential changes in the construction of permanent fortifications and in river and harbor defences.

Five days afterwards the Federals renewed their attempt to demolish this battery. They were again driven back, although this victory was purchased at the expense of the life of Major Gallie—the commander of the Fort.

The severest, and by far the most powerful attack upon Fort McAllister was launched on the 3d of March, 1863. Chagrined at their former failures, the Federals seemed resolved on this occasion to compass the destruction of this now famous battery. The following formidable fleet was then concentrated for its annihilation:

The *Passaic*, a monitor, commander Drayton, armed with one 15-inch and one 11-inch Dahlgren gun;

The monitor *Patapsco*, commander Ammen, carrying one 15-inch Dahlgren gun, and one 200-pounder Parrott;

The *Montauk*, a monitor, Commander Worden, with a battery of one 15-inch and one 11-inch gun;

The monitor *Nahant*, Commander Downs, similarly armed;

The *Peira*, Captain Tarbox, and two other 13-inch mortar schooners.

To complete the list, the gun boats *Wissahickon*, *Dawn*, *Sebago*, *Seneca* and *Flambeau* were present. Evidently anticipating a successful issue to the impending conflict, General Seymour was at hand with troops, conveyed in steam transports, ready to land and take possession of the Fort so soon as its defenders should have been driven from their guns by the terrible storm of enormous projectiles soon to burst in grand diapason above, around, and within the confines of this small earth-work.

The bombardment was commenced about forty minutes after eight o'clock in the morning by the mortar schooners stationed beyond the range of the Fort's guns. As soon as this fire had been fairly established, the monitor fleet slowly advanced—the *Passaic* taking the lead, and the *Patapsco* and the *Nahant* following. As she was coming into position, the Confederates opened upon the *Passaic* with 10-inch solid shot, and struck her repeatedly. Having selected an anchorage, these monitors engaged the Fort, continuing the bombardment, with but trifling intermission, until half past four in the afternoon, when they retired. The shelling from the mortar schooners did not cease during the entire afternoon and night. It was manifestly his intention to renew the attack on the ensuing morning; but when, upon careful observation, it was ascertained that all damages sustained by the sand parapet of the Fort had been fully repaired, and that McAllister was seemingly as prepared for the conflict as it was when the first gun had been fired, the Federal commander, recognizing his inability to reduce the work or to strike terror into the hearts of its brave garrison, withdrew his fleet and abandoned his effort; thus according to the gallant defenders a signal victory—one which takes rank with the noted achievements of this memorable war—a triumph which will live in the history of this eventful period—a success which settled the question of the ability of substantial sand

